



THE 4H & THEIR ROLES

Dr. Samindra Mohan Biswas

Associate Professor & HOD of History, Bidhan Chandra College, Rishra, Hooghly. West Bengal

ABSTRACT

The four H may sound somewhat weird as the people are familiar with 3Ds, 4Ds etc. However, four H is something unheard of. Here the 4H refers to the Hamas of Gaza, Hezbollah of Lebanon, Hizbul Mujahadeen of Pakistan and the Houthi rebels of Yemen. All these have one similarity and that is they belong to the extremist groups. They may be operative in distant regions but their objective is similar - to dislodge the existing system of governance - The Hamas want to free the Gaza strip from the clutches of the Israelis, the Hezbollah want to erase the dominance again of the Israelis, the Hizbul Mujahadeen want to free Kashmir from Indian governance and the Houthi Rebels want to establish their rule in Yemen dislodging the existing Rashad Al Alimini government of Yemeni government. So in a word they want freedom. Though the end may be different but the means are the same. In this paper, we will be looking into the background and their history as well as their modes of operation along with the patterns of operation and what their activities may ultimately result in. We will also be looking into their source of funding and the kind of weapons they use along the process of recruitment of the 4H.

It is also to be seen how far they can succeed in their ultimate objectives. We will also be deliberating on their social composition, flag and dress and whether and how far the females are involved in their operations. If we go by the recent operations these groups come into the news very often from which it is assumed that they are a very dominating.

So it is also to be seen how far they are acceptable to the society and whether there is any antigroup to these extremist units.

KEYWORDS: Hamas, Hezbollah, Houthi, Hizbul Mujahadeen, Israel, Objectives, Freedom, Female, Extremists.

INTRODUCTION

The word 4H may seem strange to many but in the present context this word is causing ripples among the minds of those who follow the day to day events in the middle east. The 4H representing the Hamas in the Gaza, the Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen and the Hizbul Mujahadeen in Pakistan. Though they operate in different places but not too far from each other if one goes by the map. Their objectives are more or less same that is freedom though the target and the meaning of freedom varies from group to group, for example with the exception of Hizbul Mujahadeen, the other three - the Hamas, the Hezbollah and the Houthis target Israel as their main enemy though the internal modalities of the Houthis may be different. On the other hand, the Hizbul Mujahadeen of Pakistan has their objective in Kashmir and to cause unrest in India and the border areas through various subversive activities. But their main task is to obtain Kashmir just like the Hamas and the Hezbollah want Gaza from the Israelis and the Houthis in their own country want to wrest power from the existing government of Rashad Al Alimini Government in Yemen. However, it is to be noted that by 2020s the Hizbul Mujahadeen have been wiped out by the Indian security forces though in the early 2000 they were a force to be reckoned with having merged with another terror group - Jamait i Islami in 1990s & Tehreek e Jihadi e Islami in 1991.¹(The Hindustan Times, 11 May, 2020). In the

case of other three, they are very much active as one can gauge from the various news sources and very recently the Houthis from Iran targeted three Indian bound ships with drone attacks from Iran as the ships had Israeli connection.²(The Statesman, 26th December, 2023). Having said the above, all these groups indulge in unlawful activities from engaging cross border firing and infiltration, to kidnapping etc. Though all of them are guided by the Shariat of Islam but they bend the principles of the Quran according to their own needs. Let us now look at the background to the formation, social composition and activities of the four groups.

RESEARCH METHODS

This writing has tried to delve into the formations, history, composition, objectives and activities of the four extremist groups - the Hamas, the Hezbollah, the Houthis and the Hizbul Mujahadeen and in trying to do so the sources that have been used are mainly newspapers, audio-visual media and secondary data such as books, journals, different reports, websites, etc. The research method that has been used here is mainly based on content analysis of the secondary data like books, various journals, different websites, newspapers and press reports collected from the archives and libraries. As the opinions differ from persons to persons, these contents have been worked out to dive deep into the workings of the 4H and their ultimate

outcome as well as their sustainability. The research query is how far the 4H would be able to sustain their efforts, whether they would succeed in forming governments and if not what would be their fate. These questions are relevant as far as the present situation especially in the middle east is concerned. One thing is certain that the ultimate result in these extremist activities is the loss of humanity.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Background:

The Hamas: Hamas—the acronym for Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya (Islamic Resistance Movement)—is the largest and most capable militant group in the Palestinian territories and one of the territories' two major political parties. HAMAS emerged in 1987 during the first Palestinian uprising, or intifada, as an outgrowth of the Muslim Brotherhood's Palestinian branch. The group is committed to armed resistance against Israel and the creation of an Islamic Palestinian state in Israel's place. HAMAS has been the de facto governing body in the Gaza Strip since 2007, when it ousted the Palestinian Authority from power.³(Director of National Intelligence, www.dni.gov., September, 2022).

Operating Areas

Primarily in Gaza; also maintains a presence in the West Bank; Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon; and key regional capitals, such as Doha, Qatar, and Cairo, Egypt.

Members

Between 20,000 and 25,000

Tactics And Targets

Hamas uses improvised explosive devices, short- and long-range rockets and mortars, small arms, kidnapping operations, rocket-propelled grenades, man-portable air defense systems, antitank missiles, and unmanned aircraft systems in attacks against Israeli military forces and civilians, as well as against ISIS and other Salafist armed group members based in Gaza. The group also uses cyber espionage and computer network exploitation operations. ⁴(Ibid).

Key Leaders

Ismail Haniyeh: Political Bureau chief since May 2017; has operated from Doha, Qatar, since 2020.

Salih al-Aruri: Political Bureau deputy chief since 2017

Yahya Al Sinwar: Gaza Political Bureau chief since 2017

Khaled Mashal: Political Bureau External Region chief since early 2021; Political Bureau chief from April 1996 to May 2017. ⁶(Ibid).

Notable Attacks

1 October 2015

Near Palestinian village of Beit Furik, West Bank Hamas gunmen kill an American-Israeli citizen and his wife in their car. ⁵(Ibid)

After agreeing to several short-term cease-fires over the course of the conflict, Israeli and Palestinian leaders reached an open-ended cease-fire in late August. In exchange for the

cessation of rocket fire from the Gaza Strip, Israel agreed to loosen restrictions on goods entering the Gaza Strip, expand the fishing zone off the coast, and reduce the size of the security buffer it enforced in areas adjacent to the Israeli border. Despite the high Palestinian death toll—estimated at more than 2,100—and widespread destruction in the Gaza Strip, Hamas leaders declared victory, trumpeting their ability to withstand Israeli attacks. ⁷(Encyclopedia Britannica, December 26, 2023).

A series of border protests in Gaza in 2018, in which demonstrators attempted to cross the border into Israel and sent incendiary kites and balloons into Israel, was met with a violent response by Israel. The situation reached a peak on May 14, when about 40,000 people participated in the protests. Many of the protesters attempted to cross the border at once, and Israeli soldiers opened fire, killing about 60 people and wounding some 2,700 others. The violence continued to escalate, leading to Israeli air strikes and Hamas rocket fire into Israel. The fighting lasted several months and ended with a truce in November. Discussions for maintaining peace remained ongoing in the following years—even during periods of escalation—and led to the occasional easing of restrictions on the Gaza Strip. ⁸(Ibid).

In May, 2021, tensions over Jerusalem boiled over and led to the greatest escalation of violence since 2014. After clashes between Israeli police and Palestinian protesters left hundreds injured, Hamas launched rockets into Jerusalem and southern and central Israel, prompting air strikes from Israel in response. After 11 days of fighting, Hamas and Israel reached a cease-fire. ⁹(Ibid).

In 2022, as Israel conducted incursions in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to target militants, Hamas refrained from escalating confrontations in and around the Gaza Strip. Many observers, including members of the Israeli defense establishment, believed Hamas was focused on governing the Gaza Strip and was unprepared for a major confrontation. But on October 7, 2023, Hamas launched a coordinated land, sea, and air assault that took Israel by surprise. At least 1,200 Israelis were killed in the attacks—the deadliest day for Israel since its independence—and about 240 others were taken hostage. ¹⁰(Ibid).

Political & Religious Position

Hamas is widely considered to be the “dominant political force” within the Palestinian territories. Hamas' policy towards a two-state solution and towards Israel has evolved. Historically, Hamas envisioned a Palestinian state on all of the territory that belonged to the British Mandate for Palestine (that is, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea). However, Hamas signed agreements with Fatah in 2005, 2007, 2011 and 2012 that indicated a tacit acceptance of the 1967 borders and previous accords between PLO and Israel. In 2006, Hamas signed the Prisoners Document which supported a Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders. This document also recognized authority of the President of the Palestinian National Authority to negotiate with Israel. On 2 May 2017, in a press conference in Doha (Qatar) presenting a new charter, Khaled Mashal, chief of the Hamas Political Bureau declared that, though Hamas considered the establishment of a Palestinian state “on the basis

of June 4, 1967" (West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem) acceptable, Hamas would in that case still not recognise the statehood of Israel and not relinquish their goal of liberating all of Palestine from "the Zionist project". Professor Mohammed Ayoob interpreted the 2017 charter as "a de facto acceptance of the preconditions for a two-state solution". Hamas leaders still occasionally called for the annihilation of Israel in the early 2020s. 10a(The Washington Post, 13th November, 2023).

Whether Hamas would recognize Israel is debated. Hamas leaders have emphasized they do not recognize Israel, but indicate they "have a de facto acceptance of its presence". Hamas's acceptance of the 1967 borders acknowledges the existence of another entity on the other side. Many scholars believe Hamas's acceptance of the 1967 borders implicitly recognizes Israel. 10b(Glenn Perry, *Government and Politics of the Contemporary Middle East, Continuity & Change*, Taylor & Francis, pg. 106).

Religious Policy

The gender ideology outlined in the Hamas charter, the importance of women in the religious-nationalist project of liberation is asserted as no lesser than that of males. Their role was defined primarily as one of manufacturing males and caring for their upbringing and rearing, though the charter recognized they could fight for liberation without obtaining their husband's permission and in 2002 their participation in jihad was permitted. The doctrinal emphasis on childbearing and rearing as woman's primary duty is not so different from Fatah's view of women in the First Intifada and it also resembles the outlook of Jewish settlers, and over time it has been subjected to change. 10c(Phillips, 2011, pg 81).

In 1989, during the First Intifada, a small number of Hamas followers campaigned for the wearing of the hijab, which is not a part of traditional women's attire in Palestine, for polygamy, and also insisted women stay at home and be segregated from men. In the course of this campaign, women who chose not to wear the hijab were verbally and physically harassed, with the result that the hijab was being worn 'just to avoid problems on the streets'. The harassment dropped drastically when, after 18 months UNLU condemned it, though similar campaigns reoccurred. 10d(Gerner, 2007, pg 27).

Finances & Funding

Hamas, like its predecessor the Muslim Brotherhood, assumed the administration of Gaza's waqf properties, endowments which extend over 10% of all real estate in the Gaza Strip, with 2,000 acres of agricultural land held in religious trusts, together with numerous shops, rentable apartments and public buildings. 10e(Abu Amir, 1993, pg. 8). About half of Hamas's funding came from states in the Persian Gulf down to the mid-2000s. Saudi Arabia supplied half of the Hamas budget of \$50 million in the early 2000s, but, under US pressure, began to cut its funding by cracking down on Islamic charities and private donor transfers to Hamas in 2004, which by 2006 drastically reduced the flow of money from that area. Iran and Syria, in the aftermath of Hamas's 2006 electoral victory, stepped in to fill the shortfall. Saudi funding, negotiated with third parties

including Egypt, remained supportive of Hamas as a Sunni group but chose to provide more assistance to the PNA. To be noted that much of Iran's funding to the Hamas are made through Hezbollah. 10f(Jodi Vittori, *Terrorist Financing & Resourcing*, Palgrave MacMillan, 2011, pg. 72-74, 193, notes 50,51).

Social Services Wing

Hamas developed its social welfare programme by replicating the model established by Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood. For Hamas, charity and the development of one's community are both prescribed by religion and to be understood as forms of resistance. In Islamic tradition, dawah (lit. transl. "the call to God") obliges the faithful to reach out to others by both proselytising and by charitable works, and typically the latter centre on the mosques which make use of both waqf endowment resources and charitable donations (zakat, one of the five pillars of Islam) to fund grassroots services such as nurseries, schools, orphanages, soup kitchens, women's activities, library services and even sporting clubs within a larger context of preaching and political discussions. To be noted that the Hamas have their own television network Al-aqsa TV and have their own magazine Al Fateh besides having their own social media. 10g(Globalpolitician.com, August 1, 2011).

The Hezbollah

Hezbollah was established in the wake of the 1982 Lebanon War by Lebanese clerics who studied in the Shia seminaries Hawza Najaf in Najaf. It adopted the model set out by Ayatollah Khomeini after the Iranian Revolution in 1979, and the party's founders adopted the name "Hezbollah" as chosen by Khomeini. Since then, close ties have developed between Iran and Hezbollah. The organization was created with the support of 1,500 Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps instructors, and aggregated a variety of Lebanese Shia groups into a unified organization to resist the former Israeli occupation of Southern Lebanon. 11(Mariam Farida, *Religion & Hezbollah, Political Ideology & Legitimacy*, Routledge, 2019, pg. 1-3).

Scholars differ as to when Hezbollah came to be a distinct entity. Various sources list the official formation of the group as early as 1982 whereas Diaz and Newman maintain that Hezbollah remained an amalgamation of various violent Shi'a extremists until as late as 1985. Another version states that it was formed by supporters of Sheikh Ragheb Harb, a leader of the southern Shia resistance killed by Israel in 1984. Regardless of when the name came into official use, a number of Shi'a groups were slowly assimilated into the organization, such as Islamic Jihad, Organization of the Oppressed on Earth and the Revolutionary Justice Organization. These designations are considered to be synonymous with Hezbollah by the US, Israel and Canada. 12(Canada Gazette, Part II, pg. 137, 12 February, 2023).

During the Lebanese Civil War, Hezbollah's 1985 manifesto listed its objectives as the expulsion of "the Americans, the French and their allies definitely from Lebanon, putting an end to any colonialist entity on our land". From 1985 to 2000, Hezbollah also participated in the 1985–2000 South Lebanon conflict against the South Lebanon Army (SLA) and Israel

Defense Forces (IDF), and fought again with the IDF in the 2006 Lebanon War. During the 1990s, Hezbollah also organized volunteers to fight for the Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina during the Bosnian War. 13(The Independent, 17th July, 2018).

Since 1990, Hezbollah has participated in Lebanese politics, in a process which is described as the Lebanonisation of Hezbollah, and it later participated in the government of Lebanon and joined political alliances. After the 2006–08 Lebanese protests and clashes, a national unity government was formed in 2008, with Hezbollah and its opposition allies obtaining 11 of 30 cabinet seats, enough to give them veto power. In August 2008, Lebanon's new cabinet unanimously approved a draft policy statement that recognizes Hezbollah's existence as an armed organization and guarantees its right to "liberate or recover occupied lands" (such as the Shebaa Farms). Hezbollah is part of Lebanon's March 8 Alliance, in opposition to the March 14 Alliance. It maintains strong support among Lebanese Shia Muslims, while Sunnis have disagreed with its agenda. Hezbollah also has support in some Christian areas of Lebanon. Since 2012, Hezbollah involvement in the Syrian civil war has seen it join the Syrian government in its fight against the Syrian opposition, which Hezbollah has described as a Zionist plot and a "Wahhabi-Zionist conspiracy" to destroy its alliance with Bashar al-Assad against Israel. Between 2013 and 2015, the organisation deployed its militia in both Syria and Iraq to fight or train local militias to fight against the Islamic State. In the 2018 Lebanese general election, Hezbollah held 12 seats and its alliance won the election by gaining 70 out of 128 seats in the Parliament of Lebanon. 14(Asma Ajroudi, Hezbollah & Allies, biggest winners in Lebanon Polls).

From 2006, the group's military strength grew significantly, to the extent that its paramilitary wing became more powerful than the Lebanese Army. Hezbollah has been described as a "state within a state", and has grown into an organization with seats in the Lebanese government, a radio and a satellite TV station, social services and large-scale military deployment of fighters beyond Lebanon's borders. The group currently receives military training, weapons, and financial support from Iran and political support from Syria, although the sectarian nature of the Syrian war has damaged the group's legitimacy. In 2021, Nasrallah said the group had 100,000 fighters. Either the entire organization or only its military wing has been designated a terrorist organization by several countries, including by the European Union and, since 2017, also by most member states of the Arab League, with two exceptions – Lebanon, where Hezbollah is one of the country's most influential political parties, and Iraq. Russia does not view Hezbollah as a "terrorist organization" but as a "legitimate socio-political force". 15(Reuters, 19th February, 2021).

Ideology

The ideology of Hezbollah has been summarized as Shi'i radicalism; Hezbollah follows the Islamic Shi'a theology developed by Iranian leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Hezbollah was largely formed with the aid of the Ayatollah Khomeini's followers in the early 1980s in order to spread

Islamic revolution and follows a distinct version of Islamic Shi'a ideology (Wilayat al-faqih or Guardianship of the Islamic Jurists) developed by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, leader of the "Islamic Revolution" in Iran. Although Hezbollah originally aimed to transform Lebanon into a formal Faqih Islamic republic, this goal has been abandoned in favor of a more inclusive approach. 16(BBC News, 15th August, 2008).

Manifesto

Translated excerpts from Hezbollah's original 1985 manifesto read: We are the sons of the umma (Muslim community) ... We are an ummah linked to the Muslims of the whole world by the solid doctrinal and religious connection of Islam, whose message God wanted to be fulfilled by the Seal of the Prophets, i.e., Prophet Muhammad. ... As for our culture, it is based on the Holy Quran, the Sunna and the legal rulings of the faqih who is our source of imitation ... 17(Itamar Rabinovich, Israel In The Middle East, 18th November, 2010).

Moreover, the anti-Semitism of Hezbollah leaders and spokesmen combines the image of seemingly invincible Jewish power ... and cunning with the contempt normally reserved for weak and cowardly enemies. Like the Hamas propaganda for holy war, that of Hezbollah has relied on the endless vilification of Jews as 'enemies of mankind,' 'conspiratorial, obstinate, and conceited' adversaries full of 'satanic plans' to enslave the Arabs. It fuses traditional Islamic anti-Judaism with Western conspiracy myths, Third Worldist anti-Zionism, and Iranian Shiite contempt for Jews as 'ritually impure' and corrupt infidels. Sheikh Fadlallah typically insists ... that Jews wish to undermine or obliterate Islam and Arab cultural identity in order to advance their economic and political domination. 18(Robert S. Wistrich, A Lethal Obsession: Anti-Semitism From Antiquity To Global Jihad, New York, Random House, 2010, pg. 766-767).

Organization

The supreme decision-making bodies of the Hezbollah were divided between the Majlis al-Shura (Consultative Assembly) which was headed by 12 senior clerical members with responsibility for tactical decisions and supervision of overall Hizballah activity throughout Lebanon, and the Majlis al-Shura al-Karar (the Deciding Assembly), headed by Sheikh Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah and composed of eleven other clerics with responsibility for all strategic matters. Within the Majlis al-Shura, there existed seven specialized committees dealing with ideological, financial, military and political, judicial, informational and social affairs. In turn, the Majlis al-Shura and these seven committees were replicated in each of Hizballah's three main operational areas (the Beqaa, Beirut, and the South). 18(Ranstorpe, Hezbollah in Lebanon, 1997, pg. 45).

Funding

Funding of Hezbollah comes from the Iranian government, Lebanese business groups, private persons, businessmen, the Lebanese diaspora involved in African diamond exploration, other Islamic groups and countries, and the taxes paid by the Shia Lebanese. Hezbollah says that the main source of

its income comes from its own investment portfolios and donations by Muslims. As of 2018, Iranian monetary support for Hezbollah is estimated at \$700 million per annum according to US estimates. The United States has accused members of the Venezuelan government of providing financial aid to Hezbollah. 19(United States Department of Treasury, Press Release, 5th March, 2014).

Hezbollah not only has armed and political wings—it also boasts an extensive social development program. Hezbollah currently operates at least four hospitals, twelve clinics, twelve schools and two agricultural centres that provide farmers with technical assistance and training. It also has an environmental department and an extensive social assistance program. Medical care is also cheaper than in most of the country's private hospitals and free for Hezbollah members. 20(UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 29th March, 2006).

Secret Services

Hezbollah's secret services have been described as “one of the best in the world”, and have even infiltrated the Israeli army. Hezbollah's secret services collaborate with the Lebanese intelligence agencies. 21(Ms. Rachael Rudolph, *From Terrorism To Politics*, Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2013, pg. 33-34).

The Houthis

According to Ahmed Addaghashi, a professor at Sanaa University, the Houthis began as a moderate theological movement that preached tolerance and held a broad-minded view of all the Yemeni peoples. Their first organization, “the Believing Youth” (BY), was founded in 1992 in Saada Governorate by either Mohammed al-Houthi,[108]: 98 or his brother Hussein al-Houthi. 22(BBCNews, 3rd October, 2014). The Believing Youth established school clubs and summer camps in order to “promote a Zaidi revival” in Saada. By 1994–1995, 15–20,000 students had attended BY summer camps. The religious material included lectures by Mohammed Hussein Fadhlallah (a Lebanese Shia scholar) and Hassan Nasrallah (Secretary General of Lebanon's Hezbollah Party).” 23(Regime & Periphery in Northern Yemen, *The Huthi Phenomenon*, Rand, 2010).

The formation of the Houthi organisations has been described by Adam Baron of the European Council on Foreign Relations as a reaction to foreign intervention. Their views include shoring up Zaydi support against the perceived threat of Saudi-influenced ideologies in Yemen and a general condemnation of the former Yemeni government's alliance with the United States, which, along with complaints regarding the government's corruption and the marginalisation of much of the Houthis' home areas in Saada, constituted the group's key grievances. 24(Adam Baron, *What Went Wrong With Yemen*, 25th March, 2015).

Under the leadership of Zaidi religious leader Hussein al-Houthi, the Houthis emerged as an opposition movement to Yemen's then-President Ali Abdullah Saleh. They accused him of corruption and criticized him for being backed by Saudi Arabia and the United States. Al-Houthi accused Saleh of seeking to please the United States' interests at the expense

of the Yemeni people and Yemen's sovereignty. In 2003, influenced by Lebanese Shia political and military organization Hezbollah, the Houthis adopted the official slogan: “God is the Greatest, Death to America, Death to Israel, A Curse Upon the Jews, Victory to Islam.” Resisting Saleh's order for his arrest, al-Houthi was killed by the Yemeni army in Saada in 2004, sparking the Houthi insurgency. Since then, except for a short period, the movement has been led by his brother Abdul-Malik al-Houthi. 25(Yemen-The Conflict in Southern Governorate-analysis, IRIN, 24th July, 2008).

The Houthi movement attracts followers in Yemen by portraying themselves as fighting for economic development, the end of political marginalization of Zaidi Shias, and promoting regional political-religious issues in its media, fostering the rhetoric of an overarching Israeli and American conspiracy theory and widespread Arab “collusion” with those states. The Houthis have a complex relationship with Yemen's Sunnis; the movement has discriminated against Sunnis, but also recruited and allied with them. The Houthis took part in the 2011 Yemeni Revolution by participating in street protests and by coordinating with other opposition groups. They joined Yemen's National Dialogue Conference as part of the initiative undertaken by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to broker peace following the unrest. However, the Houthis later rejected the November 2011 GCC deal's provisions stipulating the formation of six federal regions in Yemen, claiming that the deal did not fundamentally reform governance and that the proposed federalization “divided Yemen into poor and wealthy regions”. The Houthis also feared the deal was a blatant attempt to weaken them by dividing areas under their control between separate regions. In late 2014, Houthis repaired their relationship with Saleh, and with his help, they took control of the capital city and much of northern Yemen and announced the fall of the country's existing government, which was led by President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi. 26(Al Jazeera, 6th February, 2015).

Since 2015, the Houthis have been fighting the Saudi intervention in Yemen, which seeks to establish full territorial control of Yemen by the internationally recognized government. Additionally, the Islamic State has attacked all of the major parties to the conflict, including individual Houthis, Saleh's forces, the Yemeni government, and the Saudi-led military coalition. The Houthis aim to govern all of Yemen and support external movements against the United States, Israel, and Saudi Arabia. They have launched repeated missile and drone attacks against a number of Saudi cities. The fighting in Yemen is widely seen as part of the Iran–Saudi Arabia proxy war. Following the outbreak of the 2023 Israel– Hamas war, the Houthis began to fire missiles at Israeli cities and ships in the Red Sea; the attacks marked the first instance of space warfare in human history, as Israel began to actively intercept the Houthis' ballistic missiles in outer space. The Houthis have stated that their intent is to continue attacking Israel until it is destroyed. 27(Jerusalem Post, 6 November, 2023).

Due to their tactics, the Houthi movement is considered to be the Yemeni mafia by opponents and researchers. 28(News

Yemen, 18th April, 2022).

There is a difference between the al-Houthi family and the Houthi movement. The movement was called by their opponents and foreign media “Houthis”. The name came from the surname of the early leader of the movement, Hussein al-Houthi, who died in 2004. 29(*independent.co.uk*, 17th January, 2023).

The Houthis avoid assuming a singular tribal identity. Instead, the group strategically draws support from tribes of the northern Bakil federation, rival to the Hashid federation which had been a traditional ally of the central government. The Houthis’ lack of centralised command structure allows them to generate immense support, as Yemenis from diverse backgrounds have joined their cause. 30(*Ibid*).

Membership of the group had between 1,000 and 3,000 fighters as of 2005[140] and between 2,000 and 10,000 fighters as of 2009. In 2010, the Yemen Post claimed that they had over 100,000 fighters. According to Houthi expert Ahmed Al-Bahri, by 2010, the Houthis had a total of 100,000–120,000 followers, including both armed fighters and unarmed loyalists. 31(*Yemen Post*, 3rd March, 2011).

Ideology

The Houthi movement follows a mixed ideology with religious, Yemeni nationalist, and big tent populist tenets, imitating Hezbollah. Outsiders have argued that their political views are often vague and contradictory, and that many of their slogans do not accurately reflect their aims. According to researcher Bernard Haykel, the movement’s founder Hussein al-Houthi was influenced by a variety of different religious traditions and political ideologies, making it difficult to fit him or his followers into existing categories. 32(*News Hour, PBS*, 14th December, 2018).

Religion

In general, the Houthi movement has centered its belief system on the Zaydi branch of Islam, a sect of Islam almost exclusively present in Yemen. Zaydis make up about 25 percent of the population, Sunnis make up 75 percent. Zaydi-led governments ruled Yemen for 1,000 years up until 1962. Since its foundation, the Houthi movement has often acted as advocates for Zaydi revivalism in Yemen. 33(*Arab News*, 21st November, 2022).

Although they have framed their struggle in religious terms and put great importance in their Zaydi roots, the Houthis are not an exclusively Zaydi group. In fact, they have outright rejected their portrayal by others as a faction which is purportedly only interested in Zaydi-related issues. 34(*Ibid*).

The movement has also recruited and allied with Sunni Muslims; according to researcher Ahmed Nagi, several themes of the Houthi ideology “such as Muslim unity, prophetic lineages, and opposition to corruption allowed the Houthis to mobilize not only northern Zaydis, but also inhabitants of predominantly Shafi’i areas.” However, the group is known to have discriminated against Sunni Muslims as well, closing Sunni

mosques and primarily placing Zaydis in leadership positions in Houthi-controlled areas. The Houthis lost significant support among Sunni tribes after killing ex-President Saleh. 35(*News Hour, PBS*, 14th December, 2018).

Many Zaydis also oppose the Houthis, regarding them as Iranian proxies and the Houthis’ form of Zaydi revivalism an attempt to “establish Shiite rule in the north of Yemen”. In addition, Haykel argued that the Houthis follow a “a highly politicised, revolutionary, and intentionally simplistic, even primitivist interpretation of [Zaydism]’s teachings”. 36(*Manuel Almeida, “Profile-Who are Yemen’s Houthis”, Al Arabiya*, 2nd February, 2015).

Women’s rights and freedom of expression

[The Houthis’ treatment of women and their restrictions on the arts has also been subject of debate. On one side, the movement has stated that it defends women’s rights to vote and take public offices, and some feminists have fled from government-held areas into Houthi territories as the latter at least disempower more radical Jihadists. The Houthis field their own women security force, and have a Girl Scouts wing. However, it has been also been reported that Houthis harass women and restrict their freedoms of movement and expression. 37(*Al Jazeera*, 9th November, 2020).

In regards to culture, the Houthis try to spread their views through propaganda using mainstream media, social media, and poetry as well as the “Houthification” of the education system to “instill Huthi values and mobilise the youth to join the fight against the coalition forces”. However, the Houthis have been inconsistent in regards how to deal with forms of artistic expression which they disapprove of. 38(*New York Times*, 31st October, 2018).

Leaders

Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi – former leader (killed 2004).
Abdul-Malik Badreddin al-Houthi – leader.
Yahia Badreddin al-Houthi – senior leader.
Abdul-Karim Badreddin al-Houthi – high-ranking commander.
Badr Eddin al-Houthi – spiritual leader (died 2010).
Abdullah al-Ruzami – former military commander.
Abu Ali Abdullah al-Hakem al-Houthi – military commander.
Saleh Habra – political leader.
Fares Mana’a – Houthi-appointed governor of Sa’dah, and former head of Saleh’s presidential committee. 39(*Yemen Post*, 1st May, 2012).

Hizbul Mujahedeen

Somewhat different and operating in a different sphere yet having similarities with the Houthis, Hezbollah and Hamas as far as anti-semitism, military tactics and Islamic ideology are concerned the Hizbul Mujahedeen was formed in 1990 by Master Ahsan Dar along with Mohammed Abdullah Bangroo with the support of Pakistan. In fact, Pakistan was looking for an alternative to the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF). Pakistan preferred the Hizbul Mujahideen to the JKLF for two reasons. First, JKLF was no longer a pro-Pakistan outfit, but a pro-independence outfit, which Pakistan did not like. Secondly,

the JKLF was secular, and Pakistan preferred an Islamic group. 40(Institute of Peace & Conflict Studies, 14th August, 2000).

Ideology

The Hizbul Mujahideen is very close to both the Jamaat-e-Islami in Kashmir and Pakistan. Most of the cadres of the Hizbul are drawn from the Jamaat-e-Islami of Kashmir. The Hizbul advocates Kashmir's merger with Pakistan and also campaigns for Islamisation of Kashmir. 41(Ibid).

Organization

In 1991, the Hizbul Mujahideen set up a Supreme Advisory Council, which is the final decision making body. This Supreme Advisory Council replaced Master Ahsan Dar with Salahuddin., who after becoming the Supreme Commander, re-organised the HM. He divided the organization into administrative and military wings. The leaders of the JI were in charge of the administrative wings of the HM and always had control over the commanders of the military wings. The Hizbul has a women wing – Binatul Islam, whose strength is not known. 42(ibid).

Factions

When Ahsan Dar was replaced, he left the Hizbul Mujahideen and launched his own outfit – the Muslim Mujahideen. However, the Muslim Mujahideen could not retain its identity, as Ahsan Dar was kidnapped by the HM in 1992 whereafter, both he and his outfit lost their influence. There was another faction led by Nasir-ul-Islam known as Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen. This faction also lost its relevance after Nasir-ul-Islam was killed. 43(Ibid).

The Strength

The Hizbul Mujahideen, in the early 1990s had a strength of 12,000 cadres, especially after Abdul Majid Dar merged his Tehreek-e-Jihad-e-Islami in 1991. However it has now only 1500 cadres, half of whom are in POK. There are around 700-800 members of the Hizbul Mujahideen are fighting in the Valley. The decline in its strength was due to several factors. Firstly, it lost most of its members in its fight against the Indian security forces. Secondly, the Counter Insurgents, known as Ikhwan were also responsible for killing many of its members. It is estimated that nearly 2000 Hizbul cadres were killed by the Ikhwan. 44(Ibid).

Areas of Influence

The Hizbul, being comprised of the local militants, have influence all over the valley. Besides, it has also influence in Poonch, Rajouri and Doda districts of the Jammu region.

Training Camps

The Hizbul Mujahideen have training camps in Pakistan and in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. Ever since the Taliban came on the scene in Afghanistan, the training camps for the Hizbul were closed, as the Hizbul is viewed as the militant wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami. The Taliban does not have cordial relations with the Jamaat-e-Islami of Pakistan as the latter has been supporting the former's opponents in Afghanistan. 45(Ibid). Though Hizbul was founded with the active help of Pakistan, in the second half of the 90s, the Hizbul found itself getting distanced from Pakistan. Hizbul's closeness to the Jamaat-

e-Islami (JI) of Pakistan and the changed equations between the Pak government and JI in Pakistan was the main reason for Hizbul losing its significance. In the late 1980s and in the early 1990s, the ISI and Nawaz Sharif were very close to the JI and its Chief Qazi Hussain Ahmed. Later, when the equations between the ISI and Qazi changed, Hizbul's closeness to Qazi became a factor in ISI-Hizbul relations.

Secondly the Pakistani distrust towards Kashmiri militants resulted in its propping up foreign militants at the cost of the local Kashmiri militants. The Hizbul did not like to be porters, couriers and guides for the foreign militants. The differences in ideology between the Hizbul and other militant groups such as the Lashkar-e-Toiba and Harkat-ul-Ansar also resulted in Hizbul distancing itself from these groups, which further alienated the ISI from it. 46(Ibid). However, it is to be noted that by 2020s the Hizbul Mujahideen have been wiped out by the Indian security forces though in the early 2000 they were a force to be reckoned with having merged with another terror group - Jamaat i Islami in 1990s & Tehreek e Jihadi e Islami in 1991. 47(The Hindustan Times, 11 May, 2020).

CONCLUSION

Having discussed the above, it can be seen that except some differences in modus operandi the all four extremist organisations have anti-semitism in common and apart from Hizbul Mujahideen, all three groups want Israel to be dislodged from their occupational zone in Palestine. Again, with some differences in military tactics and organisational modes their military tactics are more or less same. Not only this, the overall objectives of the four groups are also same with the Hizbul Mujahideen, though now no longer operative want to wrest Kashmir from India and attach with Pakistan. Again, all four have their religious ideologies based on the Quran. However, one thing is sure, that the activities of the Hezbollahs and Houthis centre around the Hamas. It is also a fact that given their positions vis-a-vis the Western powers especially the U. S. it will be difficult for them to wage a protracted struggle against Israel, as it has been seen in the past, the middle eastern powers are no match for Israel. It has also been admitted by one Hamas leader as has been mentioned above, that they would have to recognize Israel at one point of time or other if Gaza could be granted to the Hamas. And if Hamas could do this then the Hezbollahs and the Houthis may also give up their aggressiveness against Israel and one can hope for some lasting peace in the Middle East. So we can only hope for a positive result in the future but it depends on the players both the Middle East and the Western as to how they are setting the field.

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